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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT LOUIS 000181

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TAGS: [PHSA](#) [PBTS](#) [EWWT](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [MP](#)
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS' EMERGENCY PIRACY MEETING: A TENTATIVE
CALL TO ACTION, WITH AN EYE ON THE PUBLIC

REF: A. PORT LOUIS 176
[1](#)B. PORT LOUIS 109

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Virginia M. Blaser for reasons 1.4(b)
and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: A public outcry from the fisheries and shipping sector, coupled with fishing ships fleeing the Indian Ocean for safer waters and a 20 percent drop in fish suppliers for Mauritius since January, prompted Foreign Minister (FORMIN) Arvin Boolell and Attorney General (AG) Rama Valayden to convene a June 11 meeting with industry stakeholders, international partners, and the press to discuss ways to combat piracy in the region. The meeting was the first public action by the GOM since CDA first demarched Boolell on April 13 on the need to increase Mauritian efforts to combat regional piracy. GOM officials used the meeting to outline the imminent economic threat posed by pirates, to set forth new proposals and legislation to combat piracy, to highlight current cooperation among the GOM and its partners, and to appeal for international assistance to help Mauritius in its efforts. Post sees some potential for this effort to lead to greater GOM engagement on anti-piracy efforts. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) On June 11, FORMIN Boolell, accompanied by the AG, convened an emergency meeting on piracy that included industry stakeholders, multilateral and bilateral partners, and the press. This meeting was the first public MFA action since CDA first demarched Boolell on April 13 on the need to increase Mauritian efforts and regional cooperation to combat piracy. The press was only invited to the first part of the meeting, in which Boolell, reacting to a growing concern about GOM inaction on piracy in the region, noted that "measures" are in place and meetings had been held, and assured attendees that the GOM understood the gravity of the issue. Without giving specifics, he mentioned "four meetings" in which Mauritius took part, as a member of various regional bodies such as the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) regarding piracy.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Boolell said the GOM will explore a proposal made by Police Commissioner Dhun Iswar Rampersad, who is the equivalent to the Chief of Defense Forces, to contribute personnel and expertise to anti-piracy efforts in Seychelles. He also stated that a Special Mobile Forces (SMF) paramilitary contingent is now stationed in the northern Mauritian island of Agalega to ward off potential pirate

attacks. AG Valayden then outlined the legal framework that governs how to handle and prosecute pirates, and introduced the newly enacted Merchant Shipping Act 2007 as the key legislation pertaining to piracy. Boolell continued by praising "traditional partners" such as the United States, the European Union (EU), and India for contributing training, equipment, and patrols in the fight against piracy, publicly crediting CDA Blaser with being the first person to alert him to the gravity of the issue.

14. (SBU) Dismissing the press, Boolell called upon guests to share their concerns and thoughts. Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) Secretary General Callixte D'Offay, a native Seychellois concerned about piracy, said the IOC had enacted a resolution on piracy in its last general meeting and has written to other multilateral organizations such as Francophonie, African Union, and the United Nations Secretary General to harmonize approaches and efforts to combat piracy. He also noted the upcoming IOC Summer Seminar on piracy from July 9-10 in Reunion Island, France.

15. (C) As the other multilateral group invited, the EU, did not attend, Boolell continued to industry stakeholders represented by Mauritius Exporters Association (MEXA) President Ahmed Parker and Director Danielle Wong. Parker and Wong were accompanied by General Manager of Thon Des Mascareignes (TDM) Patrice Robert and Princes Managing Director Evert Lewis, representing the two largest tuna companies on the island, and Managing Director of MAERSK Ltd. Mauritius Mads Skov-Hansen, representing the shipping sector. The TDM representative recounted that since January 2009, 18

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European fishing vessels, mostly Spanish or French purse seiners and trawlers, have left Indian Ocean waters because of pirates, and seven more will reportedly leave by the end of the month. This sudden departure represents a 20 percent loss of the tuna supply for both TDM and Princes. Robert said if the exodus continues factories will close and many jobs will be lost. Lewis said closing factories is a last resort, but that any alternative would be quite costly. He suggested instead the creation of delimited zones for fishing vessels for specific periods based on the migratory patterns of the fish and increasing naval patrols of these areas.

16. (C) Maersk director Mads Skov-Hansen volunteered that the cost of piracy for the shipping industry includes using larger, partly empty ships on small feeder routes because they sail faster, and paying more insurance. The shipping cost per container has gone up for Mauritius as a result of such measures, he said, and such costs are eventually passed on to customers, especially in a net-importer such as Mauritius. Hansen made it clear that he thought force was needed against the pirates.

17. (C) Boolell then asked AG Valayden to discuss the legal parameters of combating piracy. "What do you do when you catch a Somali pirate," asked the AG, starting with the question he plans to present to the cabinet in coming weeks to prompt them to think about Mauritius spearheading the harmonization of piracy laws in Indian Ocean countries. The AG stressed that capturing pirates is one feat, but humanely detaining them and prosecuting them in a way that respects the Law of the Sea and the UN Convention of the High Seas is another. (Note: Mauritius is a signatory to both resolutions. End Note.) Valayden used almost verbatim quotes from U.S. demarches at one point.

18. (C) "These treaties keep modern day operators fighting pirates with one hand tied behind their backs, when it used to be they would simply sink them," retorted TDM Manager Patrice Robert. Danielle Wong, MEXA director, called for an information exchange with Indonesian defense forces to see how they controlled piracy in the Strait of Malacca. Robert implored the government to declare piracy in Mauritian waters an act of war, with the apparent hope of escaping the

constraints of international treaties. Private sector representatives called for more cooperation among the naval forces fighting piracy. Poloff noted that there is a great deal of coordination of such efforts, and the CDA pointed out that the affected area of the Indian Ocean is far more vast than the Strait of Malacca.

¶9. (C) Boolell then invited his bilateral partners, Indian Deputy High Commissioner Madhusudan Ganapathi and CDA Virginia Blaser, to highlight their countries' respective efforts. Ganapathi touted India's history of maritime security cooperation with Mauritius and assured participants that Indian vessels in the area will continue to assist. He also made a broad reference to Indian ships helping in an effort to thwart pirate attacks in the region. CDA Blaser mentioned US patrols in the region and the maritime security equipment and training the U.S. provides to Mauritius, which includes a 30-foot Defender Class Boat and an Automated Identification System (AIS) to increase Maritime Domain Awareness.

¶10. (C) In closing, Boolell said the GOM will: create a central body to coordinate efforts; explore joint anti-piracy operations with Seychelles; designate POC's at each relevant ministry; present the AG's approach to the cabinet on Mauritius regional leadership in piracy; and devise a plan to avoid outsourcing the fish supply, coordinating with the private sector and EU flagged vessels.

¶11. (C) COMMENT: Boolell and Valayden painted a vague, broad-brush picture of Mauritian anti-piracy efforts, one that seemed to be largely colored by previous U.S. demarches urging Mauritius to begin a broader regional cooperation campaign against piracy, especially with Seychelles. While Mauritius is capable of leading a regional effort to harmonize anti-piracy laws and of conducting joint anti-piracy operations with regional partners like Seychelles, action does not appear to be imminent. In fact,

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showing a concerned Mauritian public that its government is taking action behind the scenes seemed to be a major aim of this hastily convened meeting. Nonetheless, it does represent acknowledgment of the problem and of responsibility to act. Valayden's awareness of the issues is especially encouraging. END COMMENT.
BLASER